

DUNCAN HUNTER, CALIFORNIA, CHAIRMAN  
CURT WELDON, PENNSYLVANIA  
JOEL HEFLEY, COLORADO  
JIM SEXTON, NEW JERSEY  
JOHN M. McHUGH, NEW YORK  
TERRY EVERETT, ALABAMA  
ROSCOE G. BARTLETT, MARYLAND  
HOWARD P. "BUCK" McKEON, CALIFORNIA  
MAC THORNBERRY, TEXAS  
JOHN N. HOSTETTLER, INDIANA  
WALTER B. JONES, NORTH CAROLINA  
JIM RYUN, KANSAS  
JIM GIBBONS, NEVADA  
ROBIN HAYES, NORTH CAROLINA  
HEATHER WILSON, NEW MEXICO  
KEN CALVERT, CALIFORNIA  
BOB SIMMONS, CONNECTICUT  
JO ANN DAVIS, VIRGINIA  
ED SCHROCK, VIRGINIA  
W. TODD AKIN, MISSOURI  
J. RANDY FORBES, VIRGINIA  
JEFF MILLER, FLORIDA  
JOE WILSON, SOUTH CAROLINA  
FRANK A. LOBIONDO, NEW JERSEY  
TOM COLE, OKLAHOMA  
JEB BRADLEY, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
BOB BISHOP, UTAH  
MICHAEL TURNER, OHIO  
JOHN KLINE, MINNESOTA  
CANDICE S. MILLER, MICHIGAN  
PHIL GINGREY, GEORGIA  
MIKE ROGERS, ALABAMA  
TRENT FRANKS, ARIZONA

## COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

March 22, 2004

IKE SKELTON, MISSOURI  
JOHN SPRATT, SOUTH CAROLINA  
SOLOMON P. ORTIZ, TEXAS  
LANE EVANS, ILLINOIS  
GENE TAYLOR, MISSISSIPPI  
NEIL ABERCROMBIE, HAWAII  
MARTY MEEHAN, MASSACHUSETTS  
SILVESTRE REYES, TEXAS  
VIC SNYDER, ARKANSAS  
JIM TURNER, TEXAS  
ADAM SMITH, WASHINGTON  
LORETTA SANCHEZ, CALIFORNIA  
MIKE MCINTYRE, NORTH CAROLINA  
CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ, TEXAS  
ELLEN O. TAUSCHER, CALIFORNIA  
ROBERT A. BRADY, PENNSYLVANIA  
BARON P. HILL, INDIANA  
JOHN B. LARSON, CONNECTICUT  
SUSAN A. DAVIS, CALIFORNIA  
JAMES R. LANGEVIN, RHODE ISLAND  
STEVE ISRAEL, NEW YORK  
RICK LARSEN, WASHINGTON  
JIM COOPER, TENNESSEE  
JIM MARSHALL, GEORGIA  
KENDRICK B. MEEK, FLORIDA  
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO, GUAM  
RODNEY ALEXANDER, LOUISIANA  
TIM RYAN, OHIO

ROBERT S. RANGEL, STAFF DIRECTOR

Honorable Donald Rumsfeld  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As members of the House Armed Services Committee, we are writing to request that the Department of Defense conduct a thorough review of DOD programs and policies established to prevent and protect service members from sexual harassment and assault in the Armed Forces.

The number of press reports on sexual-related incidents within the military has brought this issue to the forefront of the nation's attention. Allegations of sexual misconduct at the Air Force Academy, recent press stories of sexual assaults at Sheppard Air Force Base, the results of a recent review of sexual assaults by the Air Force Pacific Command, allegations of sexual assaults experienced by service women that were detailed in articles in the *Denver Post*, as well as reports of sexual assaults on women in uniform deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom, are all signs that this is an issue that needs immediate attention at the highest levels of the Department of Defense in order to protect the health and welfare of the force.

We commend you for your recent decision to establish a 90-day Task Force to review how the Department handles the care and treatment of victims of sexual assault, particularly for those in a combat theatre. However, we believe that the Department needs to conduct a more comprehensive review of this issue, including an assessment of how well each of the services have been implementing various DOD policies and programs.

A service woman serving in a combat theatre who becomes a victim of sexual assault faces many challenges in seeking proper medical treatment, confidential counseling and support. Anecdotal evidence suggests that victims whose alleged perpetrators are from another unit receive greater support from their chain of command than those whose assailant serves in the same unit. In addition, while victims deployed to a combat theatre may face the greatest challenges in seeking services, women in uniform stationed overseas often face similar barriers. For example, service women stationed at a base in the United States, often have the opportunity to seek services and obtain a victim advocate from outside organizations. Those stationed overseas may not have access to

such opportunities. We need to ensure that service women who are victims of a sexual assault, no matter where they are stationed or deployed, have access to the proper medical care, counseling, and support services.

Last year, Congress established a Defense Task Force on Sexual Harassment and Violence to assess the service academies' programs and policies and to provide recommendations to improve victim services and strengthen offender accountability. We understand that you are currently considering a list of potential candidates to serve on this Task Force, which will include a number of outside experts. We believe that the Task Force will be an invaluable tool for the Department. We hope that you will extend the task force's review so that it examines not only the academies, but also the programs and policies being used by the Services as a whole.

One-sixth of U.S. military personnel are female. Women in uniform comprise 15.3 percent of the active duty officers and 15 percent of enlisted personnel. Their health and welfare is important to military readiness, and we need to ensure that their needs are also taken into account. We look forward to working with you to address this important issue.

Sincerely,



IKE SKELTON  
Ranking Member  
House Armed Services Committee



VIC SNYDER  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Total Force